*Thematic Essay Do’s & Don’ts*

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| ** Do** | ** Don’t** |
| Write an essay centered around an important THEME. A THEME IS A COMPLETE SENTENCE THAT COMMUNICATES AN IMPORTANT **IDEA** IN THE TEXT  e.g. Sometimes, love can drive us to commit acts of violence.  Write a complicated theme by using transition words.  e.g. Sometimes, love can drive us to commit acts of violence **BECAUSE**… |  Don’t write an essay centered around a TOPIC. A TOPIC IS A ONE WORD IDEA WHICH IS THE FIRST STEP TO WRITING A THEME, BUT NOT THE ONLY ONE.   DON’T WRITE AN ESSAY ABOUT LOVE, RATHER, EXPLAIN WHAT THE STORY IS COMMUNICATING ABOUT LOVE; WHAT DOES IT SAY ABOUT LOVE?  e.g. Sometimes, love can drive us to commit acts of violence because people often feel jealous when their love is threatened by an outsider. |
|  Do incorporate direct text evidence by framing and citing the exact quotation from the text.  e.g.  Nora’s arrogance is illustrated when she says, “ I don’t need more practice!” (p.8).  The conflict between the two characters is most clear when Jennifer admits, “I no longer love you” (p.77). |  Don’t insert direct text evidence without first framing the quotation or introducing the speaker.  Example:  This is seen on page 66, |
|  Do explain what the quotations you inserted demonstrate and **EXPLAIN HOW THEY SUPPORTS THE THEM** |  Don’t assume the quotation will clearly illustrate the validity (the “truth”) of your theme. You must explain what the quotation shows about your theme and **HOW** it proves your theme is true. |
|  Do use clear and precise language to introduce and explain text evidence.  e.g. The idea that love can lead a person to destructive behavior is **illuminated** when …  Synonyms for “show” include:   * Illuminate * Display * Communicate * Prove * Exhibit * Reveal * Expose * Indicate * Express | Don’t use obvious connecting phrases that make your writing sound robotic  e.g. This quotation shows …  This is seen here… |
| Do use transition words to show relationships between information.   * consequently * because * however * on the other hand * but * yet * nevertheless * on the contrary | Don’t lose focus in your essay. Make sure each proceeding sentences is connected to the preceding sentence. |
| Do comb your sentences and remove any superfluous (unnecessary) parts of sentences or words to clarify your argument.  e.g~~. I think that~~ Eveline leaves Frank at the pier because she is afraid she will disappoint her mother.  NOTICE THE SENTENCE STILL MAKES SENSE EVEN AFTER I CROSSED OUR “I THINK THAT” | Don’t use personal pronouns like, “I”, “we”, “us”, etc. when writing analysis. It takes away from the validity of your argument because it seems like a mere opinion. |
| Do write in the present tense. When writing plot summary and analyzing, use the present tense.  e.g. Jennifer **is** unable to move on after her parent’s death because she **feels** she cannot make the right decisions if her mother **isn’t** there to guide her. | Don’t write in the past tense. Even though you already read the text, every time a new person opens that text the story is happening once more in the present reader’s mind.  e.g. Jennifer **was** unable to move after her parent’s death because she **felt** she cannot make the right decisions if her mother **wasn’t** there to guide her. |
| Do use the present tense consistently in your essay. | Don’t use multiple tenses in your essay.  . |